



Mao Declaring the People's Republic of China in 1949

The Present and Future of China

Attached and linked below is an article by Samir Amin on China, which can serve to finish off our course on Anti-Imperialism.

This article creates a picture of where the National Democratic Revolution takes a country, if care is taken with the alliance that the NDR depends upon. The Chinese communists have taken good care.

More than this, the article is in effect a comparative critique of all of the post-20th-century states, and more especially of the other BRICS countries: Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa.

The article deserves to be read, and read again at intervals. It is a comment by an African revolutionary intellectual on the world as it has been, is and will be for a long time to come.

One piece of unfinished business left by this article may be the definition of socialism.

The difference between the proletariat and the peasantry is not, as Samir Amin correctly notes, that one has no use for property, while the other craves property above all. These are caricatures.

The more functional difference is the one pointed to by Marx in his “18th Brumaire”, with his unforgettable phrase “sack of potatoes”, used to describe the relation of peasant families to each other.

Whereas the proletariat has learned two things in its harsh relationship with capital: discipline and social organization.

The social division of labour that is characteristic of the proletariat is what is otherwise called the socialization of production under capitalism. It is the material root of the idea of socialism.

Socialism means the integration of people over larger and larger fields (village, town, city, nation, world). If it is only *de facto*, it may in practice be imperialism or it may be “globalization”.

The word “socialism” is not precise. This is clear from the Communist Manifesto of 1848, where Marx and Engels talk of feudal socialism and bourgeois socialism, among others. Socialism is only society organised as a unity, and not as a “sack of potatoes”. The proletariat is the most socialist class because of its highly developed and explicit divisions of labour.

Communism is a more precise word. It just means a classless society. Inherent in the idea of communism is escape from capitalist relations of production. For all that Samir Amin has to say about state capitalism, and correctly, he does not say this much. But the initial reason why post-revolutionary production must be “state capitalist” is only that there is no other relation of production available.

So the move of hundreds of millions of Chinese people from the rural areas to the new cities is bound to be a move from peasant, more-or-less self-sufficient family production, towards wage labour.

Seeing it as a move from the smallholding to the factory is maybe an over-simplification. But the absence of an alternative way of organizing production other than the notional factory, is a reality.

The present absence of an alternative set of relations of production appears to be the reason why the Chinese will say that they don't expect "socialism" (probably in this instance meaning communism, the classless society) for another 200 years.

The relationship between the proletariat (the hammer) and the peasantry (the sickle) is not a relationship of like with like, but it is a relationship of different classes.

In South Africa, the urban survivalists, and the small businesses, have to some extent replaced the peasantry, but they are also not strictly proletarian. Slogans that include the words "workers and the poor" can obscure this distinction, or illuminate it, depending how they are used, and understood.

Intelligent communist-party leadership is the essential ingredient in the National Democratic Revolution. Samir Amin gives ample evidence and argument for this assertion.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [China 2013, Samir Amin](#).
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here](#).